THE RESCUE SYNDICATE



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TUDOR JENKS



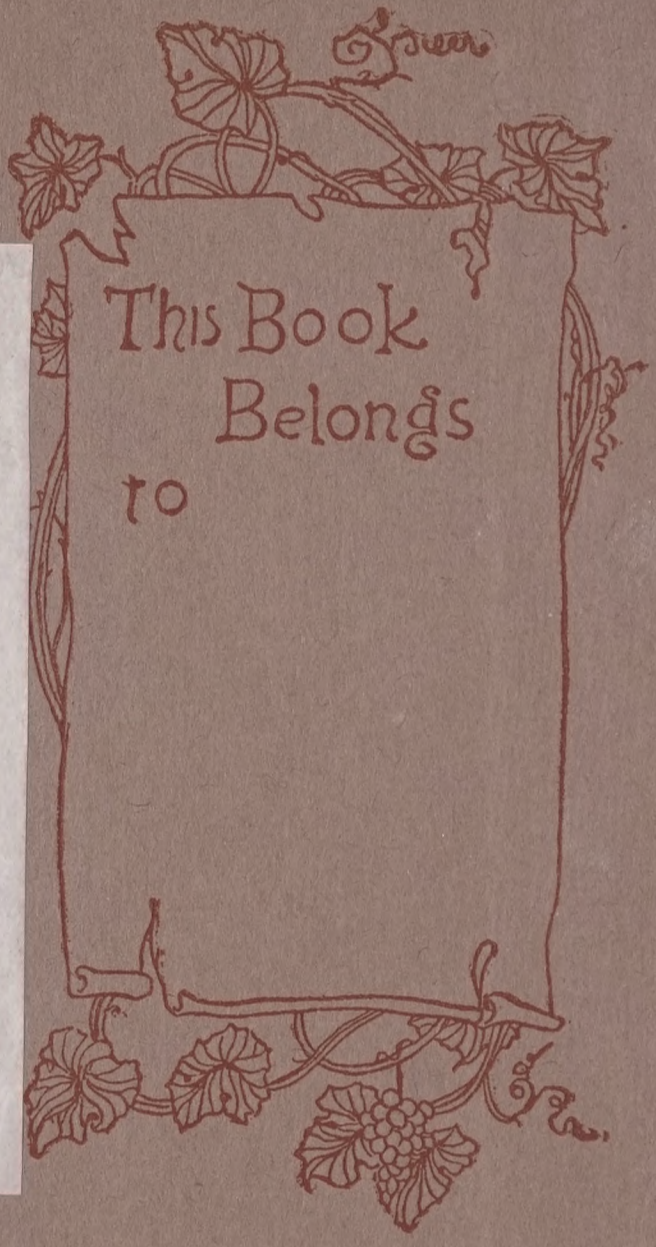


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THE RESCUE SYNDICATE







ALTEMUS' MAGIC WAND SERIES

THE RESCUE SYNDICATE

BY

TUDOR JENKS

With Illustrations by JOHN R. NEILL

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HENRY ALTEMUS COMPANY

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Altemus' Illustrated

MAGIC WAND SERIES

By TUDOR JENKS

The Magic Wand
Romero and Julietta
A Magician for One Day
The Prince and the Dragons
Timothy's Magical Afternoon
The Rescue Syndicate

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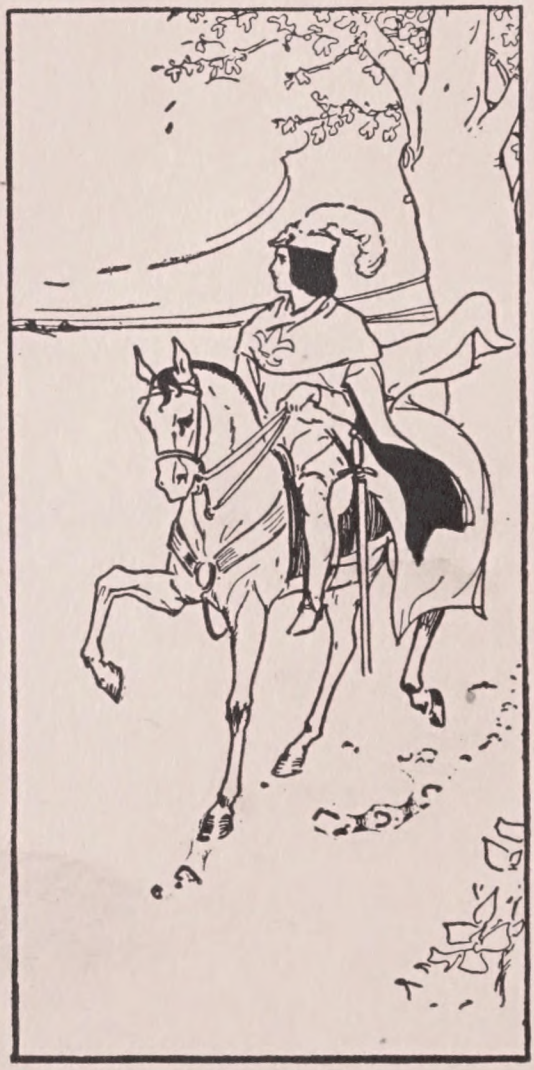
Illustrations





THE BARGAIN MADE





The Rider

CHAPTER I

THE BARGAIN MADE



UT of a dark forest there rode a handsome young man mounted upon a fine white horse. The trappings of the charger were of scarlet leather trimmed with gold, the young rider was dressed in dark green velvet, and wore a fine white plume in his cap. He looked every inch a Prince, and that was not queer, since he *was* a Prince, and one of the finest quality. He rode slowly, the bridle resting upon

A Prince

At Cross-roads

the horse's neck, and he seemed sad.

When he came to a crossing of the roads he dismounted, leaving the steed at liberty to graze. Drawing from his pocket a folded paper he opened it, and began to read to himself.

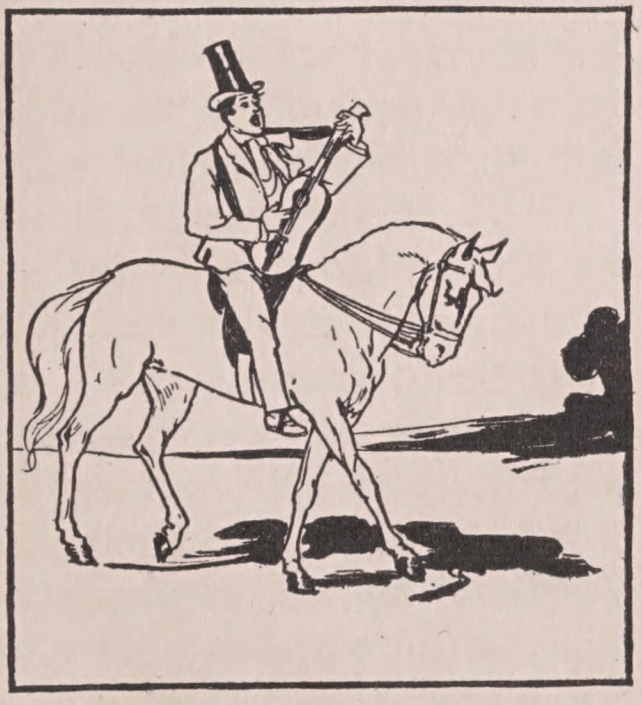
While the Prince was reading there came along the road another horseman, but this rider was in a different mood. He was cheerfully whistling and playing upon a guitar; and his horse—a spotted gray—trotted briskly to his master's music.

A Jolly Stranger

So deeply was the Prince interested in the paper he held that he did not raise his eyes from it until the jolly stranger was almost in front of him, and even then the Prince only

bowed and would have said nothing if the stranger had chosen to ride on. *A Greeting*

But the newcomer seemed



to be a sociable fellow, for he stopped in the middle of his tune, halted, and sat himself down not far from the Prince,

They Talk

who, if annoyed, was far too well bred to show dissatisfaction.

"Pleasant evening we're having," said the second rider, as the Prince hastily folded up the paper he had been reading and put it into his pocket.

"Eh?—I beg pardon," said the Prince, in some confusion. "I did not hear what you said. I was busy, and so I—"

"Nothing of any consequence," was the laughing reply. "I only spoke about the weather. It isn't surprising that you didn't hear me. One doesn't have an opportunity to win the hand of a beautiful Princess every day in the week!"

The Prince looked surprised

A Guess

and blushed a little. Then he put his hand on the pocket where he had hidden the paper he had been reading.

Hits the Mark

"I wish," the stranger went on, "that there were more Princesses to win. Times are rather dull just now. I have seen business much livelier."

"I didn't know it," the Prince answered, "I have heard nothing about business."

"How should you?" said the other. "It is all the same to you Princes. May be you have a few less gold coins to spend, a smaller number of diamond-buttons, but the meaning of hard times is a sealed book to you. We poor business men could tell a different story."

Hard Times

An Inquiry

"You are in business then?" asked the Prince politely, but without any real interest, for businesses seldom interested him.

"Allow me to give you my card," was the reply. Taking a neatly printed card from a morocco case, he handed it to his young companion, with a graceful bow and a flourish.

The Prince accepted it and glanced at it carelessly. Then he read it again with interest. His eye brightened and he became animated at once.

"This is surprising!" exclaimed the Prince. "I had no idea there was such a company. And yet, why shouldn't there be? It must surely be a great blessing. I don't mind saying

A Blessing

to you that I should like to know more of this enterprise."

Curiosity

"You shall," said the stranger, laughing at the Prince's eager-



ness. "Naturally, when I saw you reading the proclamation I knew you were a possible customer. I hope you will excuse

A Customer

Another Surprise

my thrusting myself upon you. But there are so many in the business—"

"You surprise me," remarked the Prince.

"I don't mean other companies," the other went on, "but fairy godmothers, old witches, wizards, and various magical folk. Now, we don't deal in magic at all. We are compelled now and then to call to our aid people in that line of business, but only as assistants."

"I should be glad if you could tell me a little about your company," said the Prince.

"With pleasure. As you see from my card, I represent the Princes' Aid Society and Princesses' Rescue Association.

He Offers a Card

Well Equipped

We have everything necessary in carrying out our chosen work. We attack castles, outwit witches, overcome giants, undo enchantments, dispose of wicked rivals, and, in short, for a fee that is very moderate considering the work we do, we promise good young Princes to reward them with the hand of rescued Princesses; or we undertake to restore the same unhappy beings to their fathers and mothers."

"And how about this present proclamation?" inquired the Prince, drawing it from his pocket.

A Frank Reply

"To be entirely frank with you," said the stranger, "I was on my way to the King, hoping to get the contract for rescuing

Open to Offers

his daughter. But business is business. We are perfectly fair, and if you are willing to pay our prices we should be equally willing to work for you —in which case we would, of course, see that the hand of the Princess, and any other reward offered, went to you. Of course you are a Prince, and are worthy to win the hand of this young lady—the Princess Arietta."

"I hope I am worthy of her, for I have long dreamed of the happy day when we should be married. I am Prince Prospero," the Prince replied.

"Delighted to hear it," said the other. "We are well aware of your bravery in saving the life of—"

A Hero

Very Modest

"A trifling adventure," the Prince interrupted hastily.

"And of your excellent record as a scholar," the stranger went on. "We shall be proud of aiding your suit for the hand of the beautiful Princess. You will be well matched."

"I thank you for your kindly feeling," the Prince said; "but let us proceed to the matter in hand. It may be that I shall not be able to secure your services. What must I do in return?"

"We render our bill when the service is performed; or, if you prefer, you may pay in advance."

"What are your terms?"

"Let me see the proclamation."

Terms Reasonable

A Hard Case

The Prince handed over the paper, and the representative of the association studied it very carefully. Then he said: "A rather difficult case I must admit. You see, our charges depend upon the work to be done. If the Princess had been carried off by a giant the price would have been small. Giants offer few difficulties. We have them all put down in our books, and carefully arranged in alphabetical order. We look over the list, select the likely ones, and send out a notice to them. Usually the Princess is returned, almost by the next mail. If not—why, we go and get her. We never have to threaten the same giant twice.

As to Giants

"But this is more trouble-

some. You see the King says that she has 'disappeared.' So we have to start without anything to aid us. We have to

No Clue



find her, wherever she is, and then rescue her after that."

"I see," said the Prince, with a sigh.

Depressing

Hope Smiles Again

"But don't be discouraged. We have traced and rescued 308 Princesses, 209 Duchesses, 18 Marchionesses, and an odd lot of other aristocrats," said the business man, consulting his note-book once more; "and if we are employed we shall certainly succeed. It only raises the price of our work."

"How much do you think it will cost?" the Prince asked uneasily.

"I should say about thirty-three and a third per cent. of the money-reward offered by the King."

"I never studied percentage," the Prince admitted, with a look of scorn.

"You surprise me! But no

Not Good at Figures

matter. It is one-third. Does that seem large?"

A Big Gem

"Oh, no," said the Prince; and at the same time he put his hand into his pocket and drew out a diamond that was as big as a robin's egg. "I will pay you that in advance," he went on, waving his hand with a lordly air.

"Now I *know* you are a Prince," the stranger said. "But there is no need of any fee in advance. If you are satisfied with our terms we will conclude the bargain."

"I am quite satisfied," was the Prince's reply. "Now let us get to work at once. I should like to assist you so far as I am able."

"Certainly; we shall be glad

To Work!

Forward !

of your presence, and perhaps of your advice. Mount your horse, and we will go at once to the main office."







THE CAMPAIGN BEGUN





They Set Out

CHAPTER II

THE CAMPAIGN BEGUN

NO longer depressed, the Prince mounted in haste and rode away with his new friend. "My name," said his companion, "is Cardo Indexa, and I am manager of the business. In fact, I am the inventor of it. Until lately I have been doing well, but the business has not prospered recently. To tell you the truth, we have made the carrying off of Princesses so unprofitable that we have rather interfered

Bad Business

Some Figures

with our own profits. Let me see, it has been "—here he drew from his pocket a little diary, and consulted its pages—"more than six months since any other Princess has met with the slightest misfortune. I don't think that our rates are too high, but certainly Kings and Queens are becoming absurdly careful of their offspring. I say it in confidence, but times have been so dull that last spring we discharged an office-boy, a genii, and a witch merely to save expense."

During these confidences Prince Prospero paid very little attention to what his companion was saying. He had constantly before his mind's eye the image of the beautiful Princess Ari-

A Lover's Dream

Something Coming!

etta, and had no interest in such trivial matters as the business arrangements of The Rescue Syndicate.

It was, perhaps, fortunate that the Prince was not too absorbed in his companion's conversation, for as his eyes wandered over the landscape he suddenly became aware of a large body advancing toward them over the vast plain that now stretched out before them. He directed the attention of his companion to this strange object. At once Cardo Indexa showed considerable interest. Taking from its case at his side a powerful pair of field-glasses, he closely examined the object the Prince had pointed out. Then, lowering the glasses, he turned to the

What is it?

A Giantess

Prince and said, as if it were the most ordinary matter in the world, "It is a very fortunate thing that I had these long-distance glasses with me, for now we shall have time to prepare for a meeting that otherwise might have been exceedingly disagreeable. This object that is coming toward us at a rate of speed you would consider almost incredible is no other than the celebrated giantess, Little Bessie."

"But why," the Prince inquired naturally enough, "should a giantess go by such a name as 'Little Bessie?'"

"Because," answered Cardo Indexa, "her mother, Enormous Elizabeth, was at least four times her daughter's size,

Another Bigger

A Nickname

and naturally, in order to distinguish them the daughter was nicknamed Little Bessie.

"Her mother was rather a



kindly and benevolent giantess. I have often known her to be sent for to lay suspension-bridges, and to do other pieces

Useful Work

She Comes Near

of heavy work, but Little Bessie is of a far different disposition."

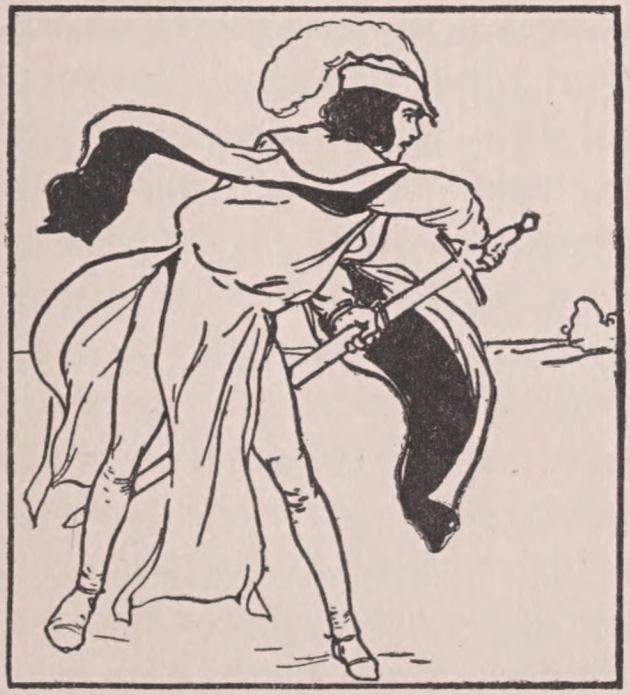
During this leisurely talk of the business man the Prince saw that no preparations were made for their safety, and at length, when the giantess had come near enough for the Prince to see that she carried a sort of cane forty feet long, he ventured to inquire whether there was not some danger in allowing this fierce giantess to approach so near. At the same time, he assured his new friend that despite the peril he would protect him until the last.

As he said this, Prince Prospero set his teeth firmly together, made his belt several holes tighter, flung his richly

Ready for the Fray

Swords Out!

embroidered cloak upon the ground, drew his flashing sword and placed himself in a posture of defence.



Cardo Indexa did not seem at all alarmed, but assured the Prince that everything would be attended to at the proper time.

Keep Cool

Not Business-like

He tried to conceal his amusement at the Prince's martial attitude as he said: "You need not make any preparations for entering upon a mortal combat with Little Bessie. I am sorry to say, with all due respect to the valorous powers of Prince Prospero, that Little Bessie would make but a mouthful of half a dozen such Princes as yourself. Besides, it would never do to treat her in so unbusinesslike a way. Other giants might hear of it and be greatly encouraged. My dear Prince, you must remember that we no longer live in the Middle Ages. We adopt business methods in dealing with such creatures as these."

Modern Methods

So saying he reined up his

Sending for Aid

horse, dismounted, and took from his saddle-bags a pair of creepers. Adjusting these, he climbed a pole a few rods from where they stood, and drawing from his pocket a small telephone instrument, adjusted it to the wires.

The Prince was too far away to hear much of the conversation, but he was not long left in ignorance of what use Cardo Indexa had made of the telephone, for in a very few minutes the Prince's attention was directed to the road behind him by a regular series of snortings that grew louder and louder momentarily.

Another Surprise

Fearing that, in addition to the giantess in front of them, they had now to reckon with a

What it Was

fierce dragon who was attempting to attack them from the rear, the Prince begged Indexa to lend him his big field-glasses. When these were adjusted to his eyes the Prince soon discovered the cause of the sound that had excited his curiosity.

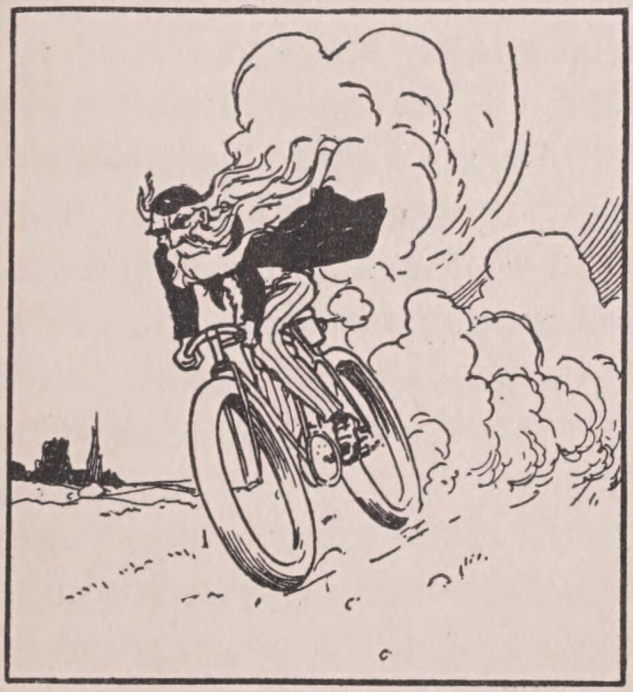
Advancing toward them at a terrific speed came a motor-cycle, upon which was mounted a quaint little old man with snow-white hair and flowing beard.

Before the Prince had time to inquire who the newcomer might be the cycle had snorted itself to a pause just beside them, and the old gentleman had clambered with some difficulty to the ground. As he bowed, first to Cardo Indexa

The Cyclist

A Polite Assistant

and then to the Prince, the little old gentleman politely apologized for what he considered his delay.



His Excuse

"When your message came," said he, "I was just around the block from my office at luncheon, and although I had given

What's the Trouble?

orders that my motor-cycle was never to be interfered with, some officious servant had amused himself by putting it away. This delayed me, and I was uneasy lest I might be too late. What's the trouble? I suppose it's Little Bessie again, for I understand she has been seen wandering about here during the last few days."

Cardo Indexa nodded his head, seeming to think that no further explanation was necessary. He wasted no words upon the new arrival, but turning to the Prince, explained briefly that this was one of their magician assistants, and that if the Prince would like to sit down to lunch for a few moments he might at the same time get some

Luncheon

idea of their methods of dealing with the creatures who used to give so much trouble in the old days before The Rescue Syndicate was organized.

The New Way

"I thank you," said the Prince. "I cannot deny that my appetite is exceedingly good"—here he paused and blushed a deep red—"but I must confess that I was so eager to hasten to the assistance of the Princess Arietta that I have made no provision for provisions, and therefore have no lunch to offer you."

Again Cardo Indexa with difficulty concealed a smile, and turning to the old magician, who was respectfully awaiting orders in the background, said quietly, "Be kind enough,

The Order

Some French, Etc.

Mumbo Jumbo, to serve a luncheon for Prince Prospero and myself—something a little *recherché*, *al fresco*, and then *—auf wiedersehen.*"

Mumbo Jumbo bowed as if this were the most ordinary of commissions, and stepping to the side of his motor-cycle, drew from the frame his ebony magic wand. With the wand he marked out a circle in the sand, and then jabbed it gently, first in one part of the circle and then in another. With each jab of the wand appeared in the place so marked a dainty dish, either smoking hot or icy cold, as was necessary to make a delicious lunch.

Now, all this was not at all remarkable, but it was a very

How Easy!

strange fact that when the luncheon was served Prince Prospero saw that it consisted entirely of his favorite dishes.

A Wonder



As the magician, seeing that everything was arranged to his taste, turned away to attend to the approaching giantess, who

Now the Giantess

Close at Hand

was now so near that her shadow fell across the place where Cardo Indexa and the Prince were about to eat lunch (protecting them from the sun in a very agreeable way), the Prince could not help asking how it was possible to serve him precisely the very dishes he most enjoyed.

Cardo Indexa smiled politely and reminded the Prince that the methods of his Association were remarkably complete. "We make it our business," said he, "to acquaint ourselves with the tastes and dispositions of all the Princes and Princesses with whom we have to deal. It is very important to us to know who are their friends, how they pass their

Very Prudent

Full Information

time, what games they play, what localities they most frequent, and even the nature of their tastes. There are just so many Princes and Princesses in the world, and we have carefully tabulated, indexed, and filed away all possible information about them. You will find when we come to search for the Princess Arietta that this information may be of the greatest value in learning where she is."

So saying, he waved his hand toward the inviting lunch-table, and politely awaiting his turn, saw that the Prince was comfortably seated just behind the excellently browned chicken-pie. Then, while lunching at his ease, Prince

Chicken Pie

The Entertainment

Prospero was able to view the encounter between Mumbo Jumbo and Little Bessie.







THE COMBAT





Divided Attention

CHAPTER III

THE COMBAT



T is true that it was difficult for the Prince to give his undivided attention either to the combat between the giantess and the magician or to the fascinating dishes of the luncheon provided for him by the Rescue Association. He saw the meeting between these two strange beings, but every now and then his eyes would wander from them to the dainties set before him. Besides, the conversation between them was not at all intel-

Giant or Lunch?

One-Sided Talk

ligible, since the Prince and his companion could hear only one side of it. The words of the magician were quite inaudible, and hearing those of the giantess only, made the conversation seem like one conducted over a telephone. The dialogue, if we may call it so, sounded to them something like this:

"I don't see why I haven't as much right here as any one." . . . "You needn't think you can bully me, even if I am a giantess." . . . "Can't I take a walk of a few hundred miles without *your* coming bothering me?" . . . "I didn't mean to hurt them." . . . "Well, you can't help stepping on insects now and then, and it's the same with me." . . .

What She Said

"Well, suppose I don't?" . . . "I would like to see you try it!"

Trouble!

At this moment the Prince happened to help himself to another saucerful of ice cream, and when he again looked up he saw that Little Bessie had whirled her great cane in the air, apparently with the intention of smashing the little magician.

The Prince sprang to his feet as he saw the great weapon rise in the air, but Cardo Indexa begged he would not be alarmed and induced him to resume his lunch. And, indeed, there was no reason for anxiety. When the giantess had whirled the cane up toward the sky it was suddenly transformed from a

No Danger

A Balloon

long branch of a mighty tree into a large red balloon, with which she could have done no damage even if it had not immediately carried her up into the air.

After it had ascended high enough to lift her well clear of the ground she was entirely helpless, and her anger made her only ridiculous. She could not come near the magician, she did not dare let go of the balloon, and it was not many minutes before she was begging to be let down and promising to be "a good girl" if the magician would undo his charm.

Meanwhile the little magician had been sitting cross-legged on the sand before her, entirely undisturbed by her loud voice and her threatenings. Upon

Quite Cool

her promise to be a good girl, he nodded his head gracefully, waved his wand in air, and must have undone the charm; for the giantess came drifting gently down to solid earth, though the balloon was not restored to its former shape. On the contrary, when she released it, it was carried away by the wind, drifted over the distant mountains, and was seen no more. In the same direction, though on foot, went the penitent giantess, seeming to be completely cured, for the present at least, of her naughtiness.

Lets Her Down

When the magician came back to Cardo Indexa and the Prince they very cordially invited him to share their lunch-

A Guest

Business

eon, but he excused himself on the plea that he had an immediate engagement with the sea-serpent, and, mounting his motor-cycle, puff-puffed away in the opposite direction from that taken by Little Bessie.

The Prince was very much surprised at the ease with which the threatening giantess had been disposed of, and as he finished the tiny cup of coffee with which the luncheon ended he asked Cardo Indexa how they could rely upon the word of so wicked a creature as the giantess was said to be.

"Do the giants," asked the Prince, "as a rule, keep their promises in such a case as this?"

Giants' Promises

"As a rule," replied the agent

An Instance

for the Rescue Syndicate, "we find that we may absolutely rely upon them—not because they would not like to break their word, but because they fear the punishment that would follow. The last instance that I remember of the punishment of a giant was that of Bulky Bradford. He was living on the cattle of one of our clients. He agreed that he would not eat more than thirty oxen in one day, and broke his word. Consequently, we had to punish him. We sent him to the North Pole, where he will be for the next three years engaged as a swimming-master to the young whales. As the water is very cold, and the young whales are very inattentive, you will ac-

Cold Comfort

To the Office

knowledge that this punishment is severe enough.

"But come," said Cardo Indexa, rising quickly, "let us make our visit to the headquarters of the Association."

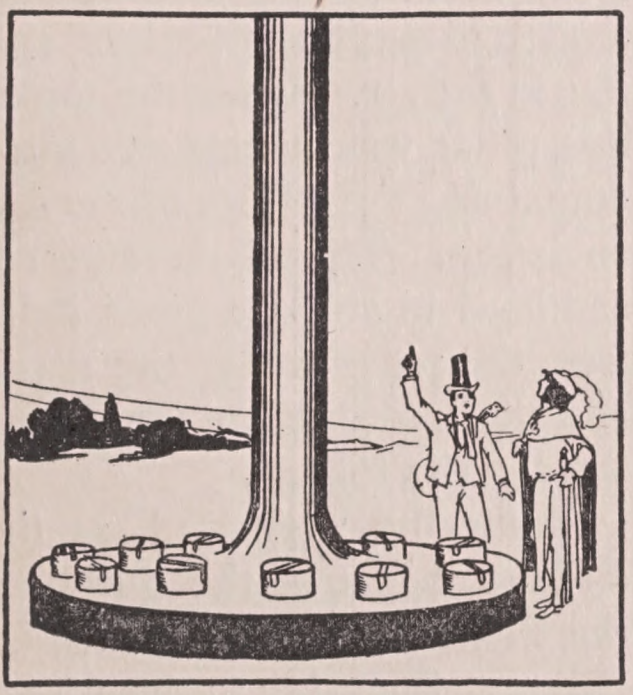
The Prince rose and followed him, looking uneasily at the lunch still lying upon the ground. Cardo Indexa assured him he need not trouble himself, that these things would all disappear of themselves within a few minutes after their departure. And, indeed, the Prince noticed upon looking back while they were mounting their horses that the ice cream, of which there had been a most generous supply, was floating away in a blue vapor.

It Floats Away

A brisk ride of half an hour

Their Ride

brought them to a narrow pass through the rocks that led to the offices of The Rescue Syndicate, and another quarter of



an hour's ride up a steep path brought them in sight of the building itself.

It was certainly a most extra-

And Arrival

A Queer Building

ordinary structure. Rising from the ground, to which it was firmly attached by immense steel bolts, was a tall pillar only a few feet in thickness and extended to maybe some thousand feet in the air. Upon the top of this pillar was a vast structure containing the offices of the Association. The whole thing resembled in shape a great palm tree, the pillar being the trunk and the building on top representing the foliage.

Naturally surprised at the strange aspect of the building, the Prince asked for an explanation. Stepping to the pillar, Cardo Indexa touched an electric button, and then exclaimed:

"While we are waiting for the elevators I shall have a mo-

The Elevator

ment or two to explain to you why this peculiar shape has been chosen for our headquarters. You are aware that our work wins for us the enmity of every sort of mischief-making creature. If our building was placed upon the ground it might be exposed to constant attack on the part of the griffins, chimæras, dragons, and hippogriffs, to say nothing of the dinosaurs, iguanodons, plesiosauruses, and other beasts—"

For Safety

"Why, I thought all those beasts were extinct," exclaimed the Prince.

"But, my dear Prospero," said Cardo Indexa, "it would never do for us in our business to consider anything extinct. You must be aware that the

Not Extinct

Wizards

wicked enchanters have a habit of buying the very latest books on geology, on paleontology, archæology—"

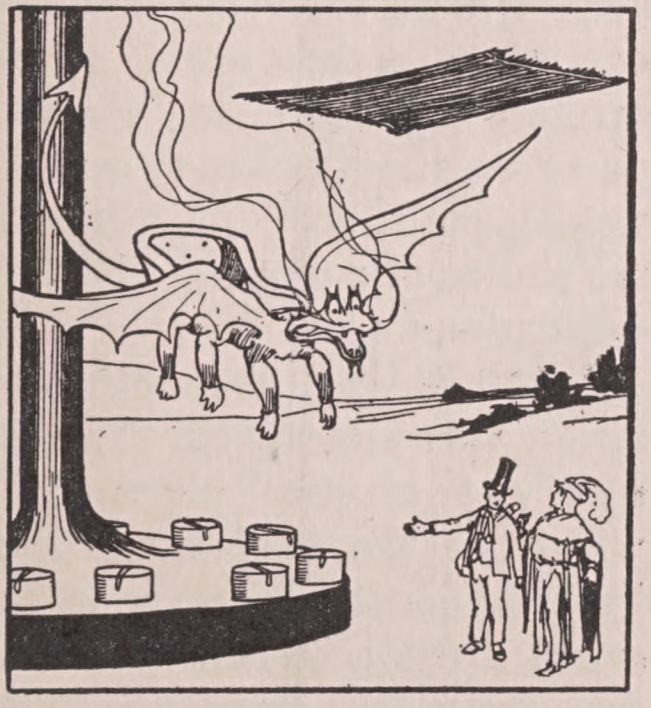
Here the Prince began to get decidedly uneasy, as he had graduated from college not long before, and particularly disliked all the long words ending in *ology*. But Cardo Indexa added only a few more, and then went on, "for the purpose of bringing to life again all the big, ugly, spiked, scaly and speckled creatures they can imagine. Indeed, in the old days when, as a boy, I first entered the employment of the Syndicate, it was hard for us to sleep at night, owing to the numbers of these creatures that besieged every opening.

Noisy Nights

Now, we are far above their efforts."

Waiting

"But," said Prince Prospero, "what is to prevent the



sorcerers from bringing against you all the extinct creatures of the *air*—the pterodactyls or toothed birds, and so on?"

Forebodings

Caution

Cardo Indexa looked round uneasily, exclaiming, "Hush! To tell the truth, no one of them has ever thought of that yet. I hope sincerely that no one of them has heard your careless remark. If they should do so we should have to invent some gigantic sort of netting in the nature of a mosquito-bar of stupendous size."

At this moment their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the "elevators," which, to the surprise of the Prince, consisted of a large green dragon, lined with pink, and a square Persian flying carpet. Waving his hand hospitably toward these, Cardo gave Prospero his choice.

Courtesy





IN THE OFFICE BUILDING





His Choice

CHAPTER IV

IN THE OFFICE BUILDING

OWING to his exertions and haste in coming down from the office building, the dragon was breathing out great masses of flame, and we must not think Prince Prospero cowardly if he preferred to ascend by means of the flying carpet. He took his place cautiously about the centre, and Cardo stood beside him. Then, at the words, "Presto, upward!" the carpet rose gently in the air, floating in the shape of a bowl.

Upward

Quite Old

The Prince had not noticed when he took this means of conveyance that the carpet was somewhat antiquated. Indeed, it was one that had been in use ever since the Arabian Nights times, and was very much the worse for wear. Not having warning of its frail texture, the Prince unfortunately leaned to look over the edge, and in a moment some of the threads gave way, the edge split open and spilled Prince Prospero out.

As they had already risen over three hundred feet, the consequences might have been serious if it had not happened that the watchful dragon flying just below thrust himself beneath the falling Prince and

Quick Action

caught him "on the fly" as successfully as might have been done by a professional left-fielder.

Success



Nor did the cleverness of the dragon end here, for in his curiosity to ascertain the fate of the falling Prince, Cardo In-

Cleverness

A Double Play

dexa had leaned over the other side of the carpet with equal recklessness, overbalancing it, and being tipped out. But the dragon, who had kept one of his pink eyes fixed upon the carpet, was undisturbed by the second accident and looked upon it only as a chance to make a "double play." He caught the second passenger as cleverly as the first, and consequently the two companions completed their journey upon the dragon, quite as if the magic carpet had never existed.

Cardo Indexa was inclined to grumble over the accident, because he had not long before given instructions that the carpet should be repaired. But his words were cut short by

Forgotten Orders

their arrival at the door of the office building.

A Mistake

The Prince, grateful for the dragon's watchfulness, overcame his timidity far enough to pet the great creature upon the head, and was beginning to say, "That's a good—" when Cardo interrupted him, hastily saying in a low tone—"Don't call him *good*. Call him a *bad* dragon, that's the way to please him!" and at the same time he stroked the green creature across the nose, with the flattering words, "That's a nice—nasty, ugly, disagreeable old dragon, so it is!" Carrying the same principle still further, Indexa sent a small boy in buttons who now came to the door for a vinegar bottle, which he gave

The Way to Do It

Funny Practice

to the dragon precisely as one treats a favorite horse to a lump of sugar.

"You mustn't forget," said he to the Prince, "that dragons are very different from other creatures, and to be called good is the most deadly insult one can offer these green monsters. In fact, the only way in which we can make use of them at all is by convincing them that they are committing some mischief, when in reality they are doing quite the contrary."

"Excuse me," said Cardo as they entered a large hall on the ground floor, "but if you will follow the buttons I will join you in a few moments. I wish to speak to the superintendent."

A Short Wait

Following the small boy, the

Not Unusual

Prince was ushered into a room where sat a young lady typewriter with red hair. Bowing with courtly grace, the Prince



announced himself, for the small boy had scuttled away. "I," said he, "am Prince Prospero, and I—"

His Title

Very Busy

"Prince Prospero?" said the young lady briskly without looking up—"Princes' Reception Room, third door on the right," and then returned to her work without paying him the slightest attention.

As the Prince entered the reception room to which he had been directed he was impressed by the excellent taste shown in its furnishing. In every way it was as well appointed as if it had been an apartment in his own palace. There were even a set of old pictures so like ancestral portraits that they made the Prince feel at home at once.

To amuse the Princes while waiting, many forms of entertainment had been provided.

Why Not?

Thoughtful

A list of these hung upon the wall, each preceded by directions to touch a certain electric button in order to be provided



with a certain form of entertainment. Thus, there were moving pictures, fountains of perfume, phonographic enter-

Variety

Profusion

tainment of all sorts, and an endless list of penny-in-the-slot machines, with the valuable improvement that each contained a tray filled with pennies for the use of the Princes.

The Prince was just about to make a choice of some interesting feature from this program when the door opened and an attendant invited Prospero to an interview with the general superintendent.

The Interview

Following his guide, Prospero soon found himself seated before a man at a desk, a black-haired, bushy-eyebrowed gentleman who seemed in as much haste as a tugboat. Prince Prospero was about to state his business when this superintendent took from a pigeonhole

of his desk a little card upon which were noted all the points necessary in regard to the mat-

In Readiness



ter of the missing Princess Arietta.

Seeing Prospero's look of amazement, the superintendent smiled blandly, and told him

A Surprise

Promptness

that Cardo Indexa had already been busied in getting together the material necessary for the prosecution of the search. "Consequently," the superintendent went on, "I have asked you here simply that you may have some idea of the completeness of our methods."

Immediately he began pulling out little knobs, pushing in little handles, turning index needles, and ringing signal-bells. Then, sitting back in his chair, he waited patiently for a moment or two with his eyes fixed upon a round dial in the front of the upper part of his desk. As the Prince looked at the point where the superintendent's eyes were fixed, he saw a little map of the world

What the Prince Said

form itself upon the white surface of the dial, and at one point of the map a tiny spark of electric fire was seen. The

Something New



superintendent leaned forward so as to fix the exact location of this little mark, and then announced that the Princess Ari-

An Announcement

Located

etta was, according to the best of their information, somewhere off the western coast of Japan.

"This," remarked the Prince, "is certainly most surprising."

"Not at all," said the superintendent. "I simply sent a message of inquiry to all our branch offices and received an answer from the only one possessing any information."

"But how," asked the Prince, "could they have known where the missing Princess was?"

The superintendent again smiled. "Ah," said he, "that shows the beauty of our system. We would not be able to find Princes and Princesses when we want them if we did not keep always informed as to their whereabouts. We have a

The Beauty of It

large number of spies whose business it is to follow these young royalties whenever they leave their homes. These spies constantly report each to his office. In that way we can always trace a missing Princess when wanted."

No Difficulty

"Ah, I see," said Prince Prospero, wondering if all his life he had been followed about in this way, and deciding that probably he had been, since otherwise it was difficult to see how the agent of The Rescue Syndicate had come upon him just at the right moment.

"Now," said the superintendent, "I will ask for a report about the Princess, and meantime you and I can go and arrange terms with the King, her father."

Meantime



THE PRINCESS RESCUED





Again the Dragon

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCESS RESCUED



AKING his hat from a golden peg, the superintendent led the Prince to a projecting balcony, whistled for the dragon, who, as he flew to the balcony, recognized Prince Prospero with a friendly wink, and in a moment or two more the sagacious beast was carrying them at lightning speed to the dominions of Arietta's father.

Evidently, Arietta's royal father was familiar with the methods of The Rescue Syndicate, and, to tell the truth, Ari-

Not New to Him

No Delay

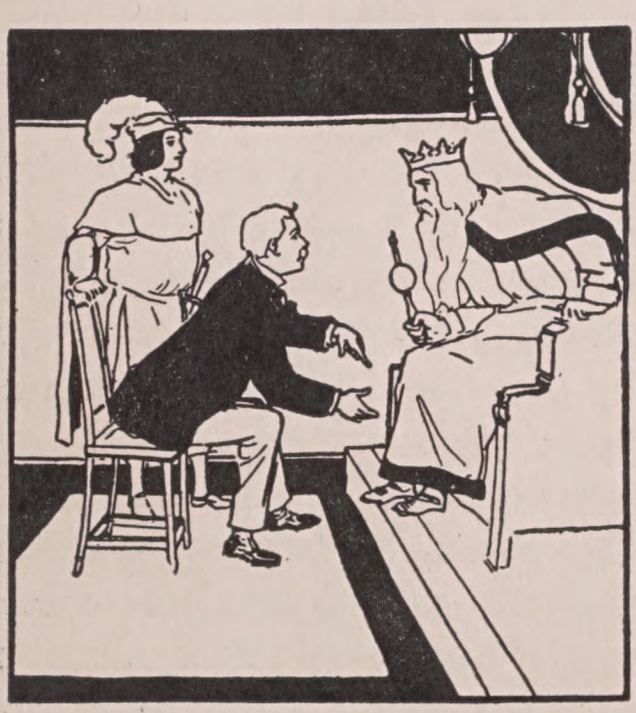
etta had been carried off several times before and rescued by this same company. Therefore, the King did not detain the superintendent in the anteroom, but admitted him at once to a conference.

The King, with a frown, declared that he did not mean to pay so much as last time. The superintendent, while very polite and respectful, was equally firm. He thought that a quarter of the kingdom was the very lowest price The Rescue Syndicate could accept. He pointed out that Prince Prospero was a most desirable young scion of royalty, and that the King ought to be very glad to get such a son-in-law at all. He also reminded the King that if Arietta

None Better

should marry Prince Prospero, all future rewards would be paid by the young man himself, and consequently this was the

The Argument



last time Arietta would have to be ransomed by her father.

This argument impressed the King very favorably, and upon

Is Convincing

Bargain Settled

the superintendent's offering to accept four-twentieths instead of five-twentieths of the kingdom, the bargain was at once settled. Then, without waiting to partake of the refreshments which the King offered them, the Prince was once more shown to a comfortable seat upon the dragon's back and he and the superintendent returned by the Bee Line Route to the company's office.

Here from a very business-like young clerk they received a neatly typewritten document explaining that Arietta was held for ransom by a Japanese sorcerer in a submarine grotto about thirty fathoms below the surface of the water.

The Statement

The superintendent nodded

his head approvingly as he read the report, and then inquired whether the sorcerer had adopted any unusual meth-

Unusual?



ods of guarding his captive. The young clerk seemed confused and admitted that he didn't know as to this. The superintendent shook his head

All Wrong

In Payment

reprovingly and sent the abashed young man to find out.

While the clerk was absent Prince Prospero, who had not relished playing second fiddle during the arrangement of details, declared that he was now quite satisfied with the work of the Syndicate. He placed upon the desk of the superintendent two large diamonds that he happened to have in his trousers' pocket, and declared that having learned the whereabouts of the missing Princess he himself would now assume the main work of her rescue.

The superintendent seemed a little provoked at this and looked at the Prince in silence as he tapped with a pencil upon his mahogany desk. But be-

Sizing Him Up

Well Guarded

fore he made any reply the clerk returned to report that the grotto where Princess Arietta was confined was under the guardianship of great shoals of sharks.

The superintendent without saying anything dismissed the young man with a nod, and after he was gone spoke thus to Prospero: "I might," said he, "insist that you had put this work into our hands, but it is not our custom to be hard on our clients. If you wish to see what you can do you are quite at liberty to dive through thirty fathoms of salt water, fighting off a hundred man-eating sharks with your dagger, and holding your breath for from thirty minutes to an hour and

L. OF C.

Some Details

Harder Yet

a half; then you must overcome one of the most skilful of Japanese enchanters. We shall not try to discourage you. Princes have a way of accomplishing impossibilities, but I *will* say only that if you succeed in this attempt I shall be very glad if you would write me fully about it."

So saying, he turned away and busied himself with his writing.

The Prince was quite undiscouraged, but hastened to explain that the superintendent had not quite understood him. "I shall be glad," said he, "of the aid of the Association and shall take your representatives with me. I mean, however, to display some little valor in the

A Clever Plan

matter so that Princess Arietta, when rescued, shall recognize that it is due partly to my efforts and not entirely to the admirable business-like methods of your Association."

Diplomacy

This compliment restored the superintendent's good nature and he arranged in a short consultation with the Prince the details of their expedition.

Into these it is not necessary to enter fully. Suffice it to say that within a week or ten days an admirably equipped airship was hovering off the western coast of Japan, a few feet above the waves that ebbed and flowed above the lovely golden head of Arietta in the sorcerer's cave. There was a group of human beings on the prow of

The Airship

Ready!

this craft, and they were gazing with perhaps more amusement than admiration at the manly figure and exquisite bathing-suit of Prince Prospero as he stood ready to plunge beneath the sea.

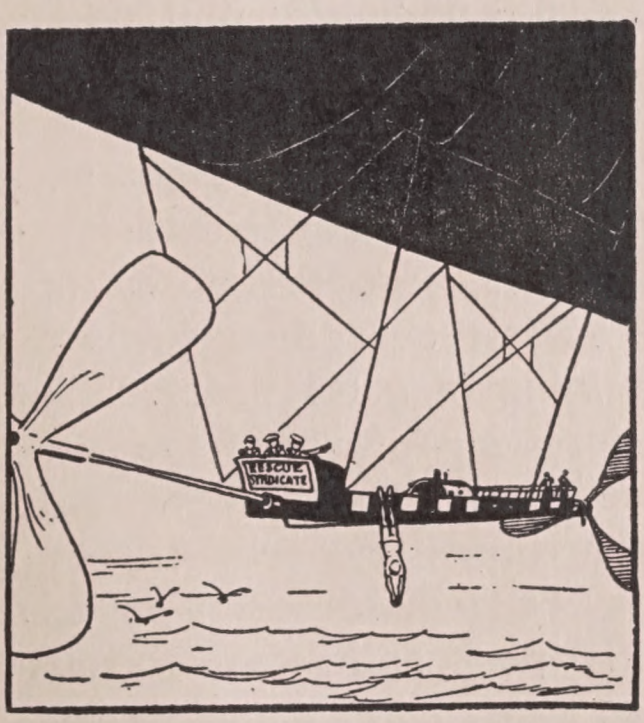
The moment came. The Prince leaped gracefully through the air, dived beneath the surface of the waves, and was immediately engaged in a superb struggle with twenty-five large sharks who scrambled eagerly for the privilege of securing one of his arms or legs as a souvenir. Exactly how many of the sharks he slew is not recorded—it may have been six or it may have been eight—but his breath soon gave out, as there is a limit to the

In Doubt

power of even a Prince's lungs.

Foolhardy Prince

Coming to the top of the water, the Prince barely escaped from the pursuing sharks



to be drawn exhausted upon the deck of the airship. This trial was enough to convince him that it would be more pru-

One Trial Enough

Quite Proper

dent to rely upon the efforts of the Syndicate, and while he was being carefully packed in warm blankets and restored by draughts of hot tea, the Syndicate was authorized to proceed with the rescue.

By the time the Prince was sufficiently recovered to witness the proceedings of the Syndicate, everything was progressing in good order. The valorous employes of the company had busied themselves with dumping overboard hundreds and hundreds of pounds of fat pork, and before an hour had passed away each particular shark had had so much pork to eat that he was entirely incapable of offering any resistance to the agent of the company.

Gorged

Mumbo Jumbo Again

Attired in an ugly but effective diving-suit, old Mumbo Jumbo was then lowered over the side of the airship, sank gracefully downward, and disappeared from view.

A half hour of suspense followed, and then came several tugs upon the signal rope. Cardo Indexa, who was standing by the Prince, turned to him, announcing that this signal meant that all was going well, and Prince Prospero must put on the diving-suit prepared for him in order that he might join Mumbo Jumbo in the sorcerer's cave.

Now the Prince

Before many minutes the Prince, attired in the hideous diving armor, prepared to make his first appearance before the

In the Depths

lovely Arietta. Lowered into the sea as Mumbo Jumbo had been, he sank slowly down and found himself in a beautiful grotto dimly lighted by a phosphorescent glow. In one corner of the grotto, chained to the wall by a heavy golden cable, was the old Japanese sorcerer. Arietta, before a mirror made of some bright marine substance, —pearl, perhaps,—was putting on her hat for the voyage home.

Mumbo Jumbo, leaning upon his wand, hurriedly explained by signs to the Prince that he had released Arietta from the same chains which now held her captor. The Prince by a few hurried gestures, pointing to the Princess, inquired how it was possible to bring her up to

Natural Query

the surface of the sea. Mumbo Jumbo explained that the Princess was under an enchantment which gave her the power for a

The Reason



short time to live in the water as the sorcerer himself was accustomed to do. Consequently there was no reason why they

Explained

All Together!

should not at once take her lovely hands and raise her to the surface of the sea.

Mumbo Jumbo as he spoke pulled the rope to signal that they were ready to be drawn up, and supporting the Princess between them they glided gently upward through the soft green Japanese sea.

Eager hands were ready to bring them aboard the airship, and within an hour after Mumbo Jumbo's undertaking the descent to the grotto Prince Prospero and the beautiful Princess Arietta, seated under a silken awning in the prow of the airship, were being carried through the upper air toward her father's kingdom.

On the Way

When they arrived, the King's

joy in the recovery of his beautiful daughter was so great that he gladly paid the promised re-

Reward Paid



ward and devoted himself with the greatest delight to the preparations for the brilliant wedding that shortly afterwards

All Goes Well

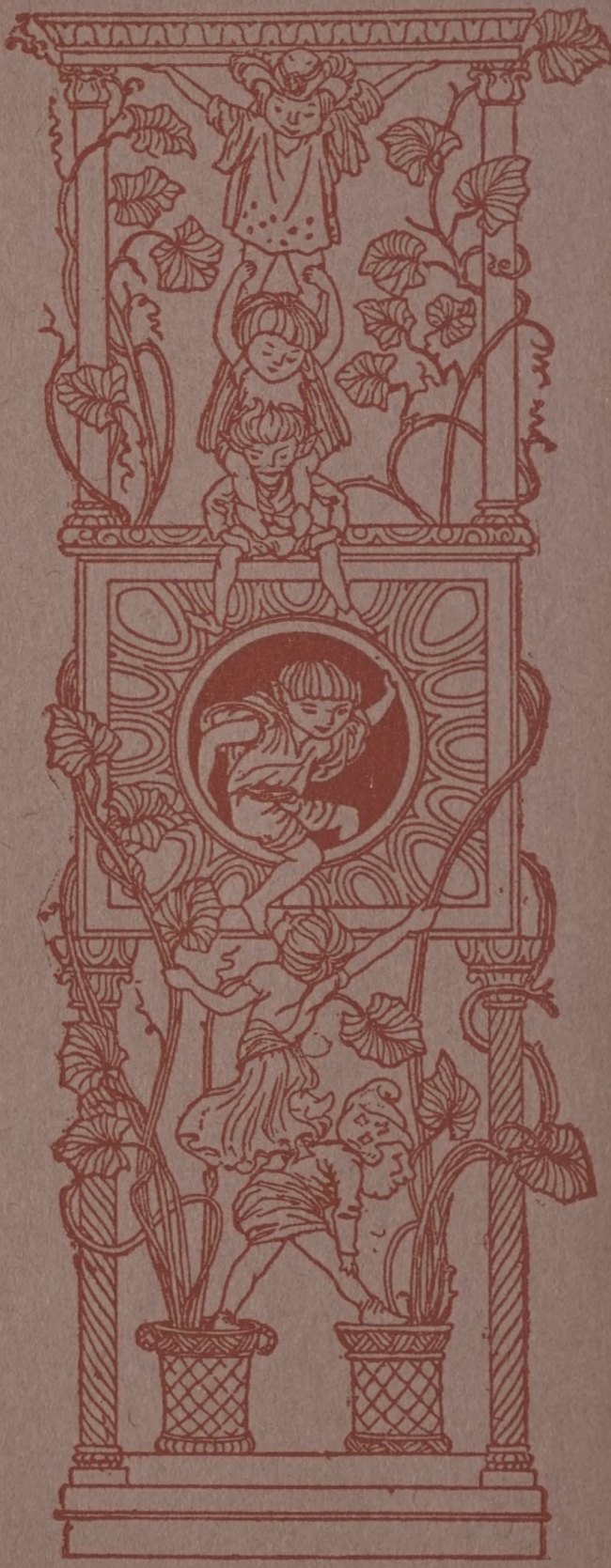
At Last united his daughter to Prince Prospero, the noblest Prince ever assisted by The Rescue Syndicate.

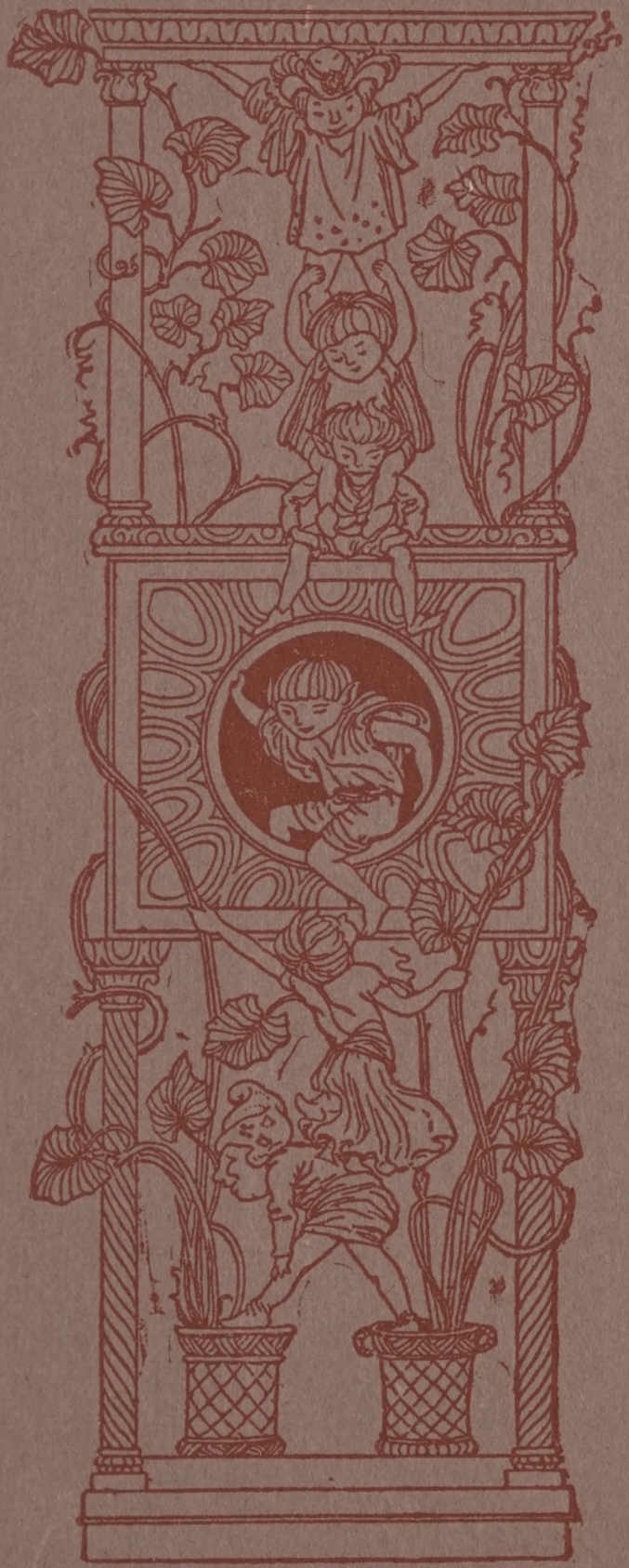




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